

Any Figs?

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Introduction:

There are some 39 references in the Bible to fig trees and 25 references to figs alone. When the Lord is speaking about the Promised Land to His people it is a place where figs are to be found **Deut 8:7-9**. Fig trees are identified with the blessing of God and with the people of Israel. When God speaks of judging His people there will be no figs on the trees meaning no blessing! N.B. **Jer.8:13...**

"I will surely consume them," says the LORD. No grapes shall be on the vine, Nor figs on the fig tree, And the leaf shall fade; And the things I have given them shall pass away from them."

In **Jer.24:1-10**. Jeremiah gives the people of Judah a sermon on two baskets of figs which are before the Temple of God. One basket contains good figs and the other basket contains bad figs that cannot be eaten. This represents two different dealings that He is going to have with the two different groups of people within Judah. Judah is the southern kingdom of Israel. They are all His people. Some are good others are rotten. Of the good group He says that He will...

Jer.24:5-7 *"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Like these good figs , so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive from Judah, whom I have sent out of this place for their own good, into the land of the Chaldeans. For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.*

Notice what God says about these good figs; six times in this passage He says "I will." God is making a declaration as to His future intent as far as the good figs are concerned. I will set My eyes on them for good, I will bring them back, I will build them, I will plant them, I will give them a heart to know Me, they shall be My people, I will be their God! What wonderful positive statements of intent all coming from the lips of God through the prophet. The bad basket of figs will unfortunately be delivered into trouble.

We see two things- Figs represent the blessing of God upon His people and they also represent His people.

1. The Jesus encounter:

Jesus had a love for figs. They were a common food in His day and He obviously enjoyed them very much. In **Matt. 21:18-20** we read that Jesus is on His way back from Bethany to Jerusalem and He was hungry and decided to eat from a fig tree which was beside the road. This was permissible under Jewish Law. The tree was covered with leaves. Fig trees normally form fruit first, then, comes the leaves. Most fig trees give two crops a year, the first in June then the next around September. In this instance we know it is near the time of the Passover so this places the time of year around April before figs normally appear. However, some species of figs bear early. It is evident therefore that Jesus was expecting something to eat as there were

leaves on the tree. But why curse the tree? Is this an act of petulance on Jesus part? Is this a misuse of His power? Has He given in to the temptation to abuse His power, the very thing which He had previously resisted when tempted by the devil? (**Luke 4**). I don't think so!

We find historically that when a prophet entered a city one of the things that he would often do was to give a sign or make a symbolic action, especially when the people were failing to listen to him. This sign would add impact to his words. I believe that this is what Jesus is doing here. So why curse the fig tree?

a) Because Jesus found no fruitfulness in His people.

We are created, called and covenanted with by God to be useful instruments in His hands. God has a purpose for our lives. He looks for fruit from us just as He looked for fruit from the fig tree. Look at the parable in Luke 13.

***Luke 13:6,7.** He also spoke this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?'"*

Forty-two times Jesus mentions fruit in the N.T. Fruit is important to Him. It shows Him that we appreciate Him for what He has done in our lives.

Jesus says...

***John 15:16** You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.*

Our endeavours are to produce good fruit for the kingdom of God. We can't do anything or produce anything that is of any permanence if we are not walking with the Spirit of God. We need to walk in the Spirit, hear what the spirit is saying and take as our responsibility the challenge to do the things that He tells us to do.

***Luke 6:43,44** For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush.*

The good fruit that we produce marks us as being in the kingdom. Good trees always bear good fruit. That is what Jesus is looking for. The fig tree was cursed because it like the people of Judah failed to produce Kingdom fruit. Cursing the fig tree symbolised that...

b) The blessing that was Israel's would pass to others:

The cursing of the fig tree was a sign that God's blessing, promised to them when He brought them into the Promised Land and conditional upon their obedience, was now passing on to others. The people had consistently disobeyed Him, gone after idols, had not listened to His exhortations or the words of the prophets and now were about to totally rejecting Him. It was no longer sufficient that they were children of Abraham and therefore inheritors of the blessing of God. They had professed faith without being practitioners of the faith. Claiming lineage from Abraham would be of no use...

***Luke 3:8,9.** Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the*

axe is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

God was going to raise up a new seed after Abraham. Blessing would come to others as God had promised earlier to Abraham that in "*his seed all the nations would be blessed*" **Gen.12:3**.

Now look at what Paul writes to the Galatians ...

Gal.3:13-14 *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

We who are Gentiles now have the blessing of Abraham because Israel rejected Jesus. *He came unto His own and they received Him not* **John 1:11**. Now we have been grafted into the root which is Israel and are recipients of the blessing of God. But we too need to be careful because as Paul wrote to the Roman church...

Rm.11:21,22. *For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.*

Are you a fig bearer bearing fruit fit for the kingdom and as a result of bearing that fruit walking in the blessing of God?

Questions

1. What is the significance of figs and fig trees in the Scriptures?
2. In Jeremiah's vision what do all the promises indicate about the good figs?
3. Why would Jesus have expected there to be figs on the tree and was He being petulant when He cursed the tree?
4. In what way are we expected to be like the fig tree?
5. What may we expect to happen if we do not produce fruit?
6. In what ways can we produce fruit for the Kingdom?